EDITORIAL

2020 reflected: part 3

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Editor-in-Chief

The *BDJ* Upfront section includes editorials, letters, news, book reviews and interviews. Please direct your correspondence to the News Editor, Kate Quinlan at k.quinlan@nature.com. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible.

None could have anticipated the changes that the pandemic has wrought on virtually every aspect of our lives and in early March it was business as usual for the journal and its sister publications. The onset of the pandemic and the confinement of us all to our homes unleashed a flood of submissions of papers and of letters, the scale of which has never previously been experienced. As well as wishing to write on the coronavirus and its effects on dentistry, authors, probably still in their night attire, clasping a warm mug of coffee and leaning back in their comfy chairs reached for the bottom draw in their desks as they finally had time to finish that long overdue manuscript. While writing this editorial, with a further month to go, we have received approximately double our usual number of submissions this year. It has been exhausting but very productive and has brought forth some excellent papers by seriously good authors, which we will be publishing into 2021.

The problem early on in the first UK lockdown mayhem was that any results of 'research' into coronavirus were impossible to report. There just wasn't time to have set up studies and reached valid conclusions – indeed these several months later it is arguably still the case. Not that it prevented the submission of speculative papers claiming to have identified links between the virus and periodontology, diabetes and even orthodontics. Instead, what began to emerge were accounts of patient numbers and types of treatment provided in urgent care centres. These reminded me of voting counts on election nights when different constituencies vie to become the first to report. Only in this instance it was institutions wishing to lead the field. As the pandemic developed so the nature of the submissions also gradually shifted. Online surveys exploring students' and dentists' feelings about the situation all reported anxiety. No surprise. Later, descriptions and diagrams of all manner of home-built, Heath-Robinson style extractor mechanisms

and fans arrived with the inventors imploring publication. More recently, and more seriously, research into the rise of the prescriptions of antibiotics has surfaced. In selecting what to publish we have to make some difficult choices but the aim is always to help enhance the literature and hopefully to benefit future planning and decision making to improve patient care.

It is not surprising that it was letters to the editor which became more expressive of the unravelling story, encompassing fears, anxieties, anger, bewilderment, in addition to well-intentioned suggestions for possible solutions. The various content seemed to me to cover the range of emerging emotions and make for a narrative of the times, gradually

So, I would like to thank all of our authors once again for their participation and regard for the journal. Such an increase has also put huge pressure on our referees and reviewers. To enable as swift a peer review process as possible we instituted an expedited route for coronavirus-related papers. I would also therefore like to take this opportunity to thank in particular the reviewers who we pestered for speedy replies, as well as all our many referees for their amazing, uncomplaining support throughout this year. We and the authors are very grateful.

Since March the entire team behind the *BDJ* Portfolio have been working from home, other than the printers and those involved in distribution. Every single issue of every single

'Thank you, the readers, for your remarkable support.'

revealing a jigsaw-like picture of the reality that readers were facing in the UK and worldwide. As a consequence we expanded the letters' pages significantly and these, together with all our coronavirus-related content are conveniently brought together in a now extensive 'collection' available on the *BDJ* website with completely free access.

The torrent of submissions has inevitably meant repetition and overlap so that we have concomitantly had to disappoint many more authors than previously. We have attempted to treat everyone fairly with full explanations and to answer all subsequent appeals and further correspondence. Almost all have understood and been, perhaps surprisingly given that no one likes rejection, kind in their regard for the way in which we have been handling matters.

title has been published in full and on time throughout the pandemic and I want to record my heartfelt thanks and respect to each and every team member for their dedication and professionalism. Without you this just would not have been possible.

Last, but by no means least in this tryptical review of 2020 I wish to thank you, the readers, for your remarkable support. Your continual monitoring of, and comment and suggestions on our content helps make the *BDJ* what it is and we value this enormously. In conclusion to the journal's year, or more particularly these past nine months, I end by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and Holiday Season and without reservation a *Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year.* ■

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